

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL  
TERRORISM AND NONPROLIFERATION**

**TESTIMONY OF  
LEROY D. BACA, SHERIFF  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
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The impact of international border security reaches far beyond the line between California and Mexico. Although the County of Los Angeles is not geographically contiguous to the U.S./Mexican border, issues of illegal entry into the United States are important in the early intervention and prevention of terrorism. In order to remain adequately prepared, it is essential to have an effective network for information sharing and analysis. My testimony today will focus on efforts made by my Department in cooperation with federal, state and local agencies to share information aimed at preventing, disrupting or mitigating a terrorist attack.

Originated in 1996 by two Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies, the Terrorism Early Warning (TEW) Group has been identifying and analyzing indications of the potential for a terror attack within Los Angeles County. The TEW provides a system to collect and process information across jurisdictional and disciplinary lines, and therefore, enables a complete perspective beyond that of only traditional criminal intelligence. From its humble beginnings, the TEW now employs subject matter experts from law enforcement, the fire service, public health, academia and the military, all-working together to ensure the safety of Los Angeles County residents. The TEW has recently evolved into the Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC), which combines assets from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles Police Department, FBI, United States Attorney General's Office and the California State Office of Homeland Security (OHS). It is here that representatives from federal and state agencies work side by side with local public safety practitioners. Participation also includes representatives from the surrounding six counties as cooperative partners. Included in this system is an extensive network of Terrorism Liaison Officers (TLO), who act as primary points of contact for their respective agencies. The creation of long-term relationships built on mutual trust has resulted in high quality analytical products that are provided to decision makers covering a variety of terror related subjects. The combination of analysts from a variety of agencies and disciplines enables an expansive view for identifying trends and recognizing potential activity, which could indicate a pending terrorist attack.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) presence at the JRIC is essential. In addition to the one analyst currently assigned however, there is a need for full-time representatives from other DHS agencies such as Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Transportation Security Agency and the Coast Guard. These organizations possess critical information that must be synthesized with local intelligence to provide the clearest view possible of potential threats to the nation and the region. All of these partnerships are necessary to overcome the traditional bureaucratic inertia in the field of intelligence sharing.

To further this effort, The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department also participates on the Los Angeles Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Alongside our partners from federal, state and local agencies, Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff's investigate cases linked to terrorism within the County. Information gathered during these investigations is disseminated by the FBI on a regular basis to all appropriate agencies.

The State of California has also recognized the value of cooperation between federal, state and local agencies by funding a series of Regional Terrorism Threat Assessment Centers (RTTAC). The JRIC functions as the RTTAC for the Southern California Region, which encompasses a total of seven counties. I strongly encourage the participation of any public agency involved in issues of Homeland Security with its local RTTAC, TEW or other fusion center to ensure the best possible analysis and information sharing.

Los Angeles County is more than 100 miles from the Mexican border, but we feel the effects of its vulnerability. Twenty-six percent of the inmates in the custody of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department are eligible for State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) funding, which indicates their illegal presence in the United States. However, SCAAP funding requirements are so stringent that 26 percent is not an accurate assessment of the actual number of immigration status offenders in County custody. When the SCAAP funding requirements are set aside, we believe that actual percentage is closer to 40 percent. As a result of this funding disparity, my Department is not reimbursed adequately by the federal government. I would request that Congress take another look at the SCAAP program for a more equitable reimbursement process. Whether the percentage is 26 or 40, these inmates have entered the United States in every way imaginable, from fraudulently obtained visas, to stowing away in cargo containers to simply walking across an unguarded section of the border. While in Los Angeles County, these inmates have committed crimes that resulted in their being incarcerated in my jail system. Recognizing the need to have these offenders screened prior to release into the community, Los Angeles County entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to provide training to custodial personnel regarding immigration status offenses. This training enables

county employees to screen inmates for potential deportation proceedings once their Los Angeles County criminal cases have been adjudicated. This pilot program, now in its sixth month has resulted in 3,317 interviews of potential illegal immigrants. Of these, federal immigration holds were placed on 1,886 inmates of whom 1,431 were approved for action by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This cooperative arrangement with the federal government is the first of its kind and would have been unthinkable prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>.

As to the more general question regarding terrorists crossing the southern border, I have no reason to dispute FBI Director Mueller's statements regarding his belief that it is not only possible, but that it has already occurred. It makes logical sense that anyone wishing to enter the United States illegally would use paths that have proven successful in the past. Millions of illegal immigrants have successfully crossed our southern border and are living undetected within Los Angeles County. While most have come looking to improve their economic status in life, the obligation of all of us in public safety is to, first, keep those that would harm the United States from entering, and second, remove them from our community should we find them already here. As the elected leader of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, I am committed to expanding cooperation with all federal, state and local agencies in our efforts to combat terrorism. The citizens of Los Angeles County and the nation deserve a secure homeland. No one agency can provide that security. Only by working together in a collaborative, mutually supportive environment can we provide the security we all assumed was in place prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.